

V the final battle

It's said that those who fail to learn from history are condemned to repeat it. The story of *V* is an achingly familiar one, told through an equally familiar science-fiction scenario. Visitors from outer space arrive, bringing gifts, promises of friendship and medical advances, and, best of all, they look just like us. As a wide-eyed Earth incredulously watches Steven Spielberg's fairytale fantasies come to life before their very eyes, promises of peace are made, and the world prepares itself for a new age. Unfortunately, events are about to take an all too familiar turn. Slowly, almost unnoticeably, and well away from the initial glare of the media, things start to go awry. Doubts set in. People begin to disappear, the media is suspect, a fabricated conspiracy against the alien visitors is implied, and suddenly the world is under martial law "for its own protection". Police have new masters, the newspapers all say the same thing, the economy is up the creek and various individuals are being branded enemies of the all that is decent and reasonable. Nobody is sure what to believe until, as usual, it's all too late. The takeover is complete.

It's ironic how history does tend to repeat itself... not just within the premise of *V*, which shows the events of Nazi Germany happening all over again on a science-fiction scale, but also in the evolution of filmed SF. Just as TV drew from the best of SF cinema of the 1950s, improving on their better qualities to produce such superior 1960's SF TV series as *The Twilight Zone*, *The Outer Limits*, *Star Trek* and *The Invaders*, so has *V* taken the imagery and sophistication of present day state-of-the-art SF cinema — *Star Wars*, *Close Encounters*, *Alien* and produced once again more meaningful and substantial results.

The creator of *V*, and the writer, producer and director of the first four hours was Kenneth Johnson, a man with considerable experience in TV science-fiction behind him. He'd done what he could with the concept of *The Bionic Woman* and had made *The Incredible Hulk* into an enjoyable entertainment that had transcended its creative and economic limitations. Interestingly, his



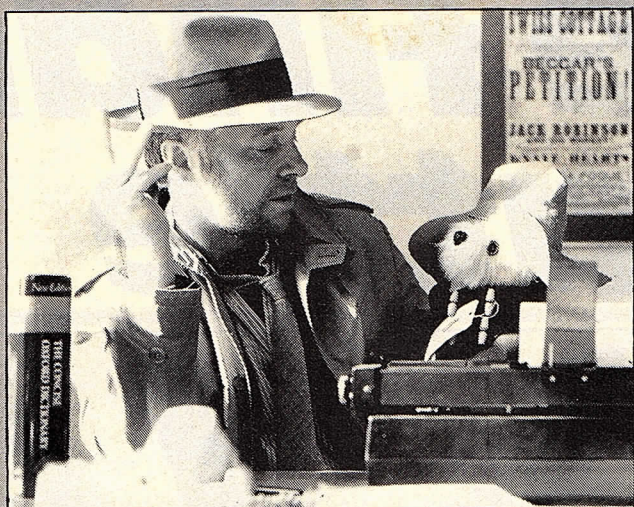
June Chadwick, Jane Badler — the bad guys — with Faye Grant, Marc Singer, Jeff Yagher and Blair Tefkin leaders of the fight for freedom in *V*

The successful mini series *V* is about to blast off onto your TV screens. Jon Abbott takes a very close look at the thinking behind the decision to go weekly...

original idea for *V* had been to show American freedom fighters in the grip of an invading army but decided that common sense ruled out a military attack from China or Russia. Instead, his

background in successful TV fantasy haunted him and the result was not a "Red Dawn" or a yellow peril but an invasion by reptilian aliens that put the ludicrous naivete of Spielberg's *ET* and

October Competition



By way of a change our December competition featured a film for children. The famous Paddington Bear, videos and sweatshirts to be won by a dozen lucky readers.

The first prize — *Paddington's All Time Television Favourites* and a large Paddington — was won by Angela Campbell of Leighton Buzzard. Her caption 'IT MAY SOUND LIKE A SILLY NAME TO YOU, BUT I COULD HAVE BEEN LEFT AT VICTORIA' received the most votes from our panel. Peter Davey of Bracknell came a close second with 'THE GOLDBLOCKS DAME HAS CONFESSED TO THE PORRIDGE CAPER'. Many of the entries took on the private eye theme 'JUST GIVE ME THE BEAR FACTS OF THE CASE, CHRIS!' came from Mrs. L. Morris of Bow. Other runners up were Michael Smith of Stratford, Derek Tait of Plymouth and Dave Bardwood of North Yorks. Each of the five runners up will receive a copy of the video. The six third prize winners will each be getting a Paddington sweatshirt or a little Paddington Bear.

Mrs. A. Defriend of Mile End; Craig Wise of Poole; M. Petherick of Tettershow; Cara Sinclair of Aberdeen; J. Reeve of Enfield and Aaron J. Doherty Co. Derry.

Tamper Proof Display



The VideoPort 20" and 12"

The VideoPort 20" and 12" are combination monitor and video machines. The package can be securely locked to thwart twit-

ching fingers getting at the controls once set and the whole will probably be making an appearance at one of your local supermarkets in the near future.

New Two From Philips



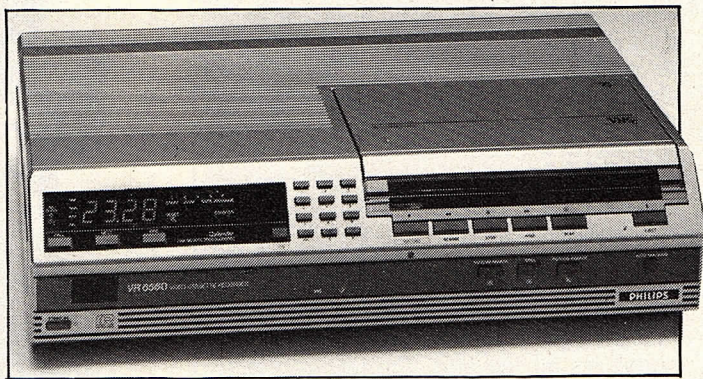
The Philips VR6460 with partner the VR6560

The VR6460 and the VR6560 are the first VHS machines to be made by Philips in Europe.

The 6460 features still frame, instant record button and can be programmed for 2 events up to one month in advance. It costs around £399 and has an optional infra red remote.

The 6560 cost around £450 and is a top loader. Features include freeze frame and step by step slow motion, instant record button and automatic tracking.

The machine can be programmed for five events up to one month in advance and comes complete with infra red remote control.



Agfa Offer

With each twin pack of Agfa High Colour E-180 video tapes purchased — for a limited period — the lucky buyer will receive a free audio cassette.

Agfa have announced that, later this year, they will be adding

to their existing range the P-5 High grade and E-5 Super High Grade in the 8mm format together with VHSC cassettes. Agfa are the first independent software manufacturer to announce cassettes for the 8mm format.

Paris, Texas — The Winners

Palace Video will be sending the smash *Paris, Texas* to the ten lucky winners of our special Palace competition featured in the November issue of Video Today.

The winners are; John Green of Wednesbury; David Slater of Stockport; Malcolm Jackson of

Tyne & Wear; Peter Hunniset of Bedfordshire; Patrick Mallows of Bromley; Vitomir Neskovic of South Yorkshire; Jayne Jones of South Wales; G.A.C. Cooper of Bushey Heath; Malcolm Tipton of Salop and Michael Spitzer of South West London.



Hero Marc Singer and Faye Grant

Close Encounters into their proper perspective. . . . After all, what would intelligent and benevolent life-forms really make of this planet and the morally corrupt and criminal behaviour of its people and organisation, of religious fanaticism, famine, assassination, poverty and warfare? If Klaatu of *The Day The Earth Stood Still* were to visit us now it seems doubtful we'd even get the twenty-four hour warning!

Unlike the 1950's invasion epics such as *Earth Vs. The Flying Saucers*, *War Of The Worlds*, *The Day The Earth Stood Still*, *Invaders From Mars* etc., there's no US army to come trundling to the rescue, with their tanks and guns; they're all out of commission or under the control of the aliens who, inevitably, have superior weapons anyhow. Instead, a resistance movement of freedom fighters springs up led by scientist Julie Parrish and news-man Mike Donovan (Faye Grant and Marc Singer), and naturally featuring a healthily diverse cross-section of the aware general public; disillusioned cops, street-smart kids, fugitive scientists, and elderly citizens who have seen it all before.

Original

The original two mini-series of *V* — shown as one complete ten hour epic by ITV, a wise move — stand as a landmark in TV and cinema SF. In fact *V* could have, and perhaps should have been, a film — but for its length — it was vastly superior to many wide-screen offerings, and would certainly have been accorded a more deserving and intelligent critical appraisal than the one it received as television. *V* is not an original vision, but, like the best of US TV, an extension and improvement on what has gone before. The significance and strength of its first ten hours was that it set its sights — like *The Invaders* — on people rather than the paraphernalia of SF, using each individual character to represent one aspect of the situation in the best tradition of television shorthand.

Johnson had intended, sensibly, that the story should end with *V — The Final Battle*, the sequel he had begun working on. . . . but then the inevitable happened. *V* had been an unexpected smash hit for NBC. It had been the network's boss, Brandon Tartikoff, who had initially suggested the science-fiction slant to Johnson's original theme of Nazi history repeating itself. By the time the surprising ratings for Johnson's first four hours were in, it was almost time for the new season to roll, and while NBC at that time had the prestigious, critically-acclaimed series — *St. Elsewhere*, *Cheers*, *Hill Street Blues* — it had only one major runaway success. . . . tellingly, *The A-Team*.

In an all-too-familiar scenario these days, Johnson fell out with the network who, typically true to form, wanted the sequel *V — The Final Battle* much too soon without the rough edges showing. Unwilling to compromise, Johnson departed the project and the network, owning the rights, called in an entire team of writers to "fix" Johnson's script for the early transmission date required.

Creative

The first four hours by Johnson had been a single man's vision, and a solo creative project written, directed and produced by him. It took six writers, two executive producers, and one director to replace him. It was an able director at least, with a strong track record, who took over — Richard Neffron was responsible for a number of TV movies with a message and soon warmed to the concept of Johnson's allegory against fascism. He was also the director of the pilot films for such quality TV as *Toma* and *The Rockford Files* during producer Stephen Cannell's better days.

Johnson's replacements as executive producers were Robert Singer and Daniel Blatt, both of whom had previously produced the films *Cujo* and *The Howling*. The rest of the team were also familiar with the fantasy genre — Neffron having directed the film *Futureworld* — and lead actor Marc



Alien villainesses June Chadwick and Jane Badler

Singer having played the lead in the sword and sorcery film *Beastmaster* with Tanya Roberts of *Sheena* as his co-star. Rebel leader Faye Grant was a regular in the super-hero spoof show *The Greatest American Hero* (unseen on UK screens except on cable) and new co-star and antagonist for Diana (Jane Badler) was Sarah Douglas who had been seen playing similarly villainous parts in *Superman 2* and *Conan The Destroyer*. Production designer Martin Rabinowitz had worked on the TV series *Logan's Run* and the mini-series *Salem's Lot*.

Series

Frank Ashmore, who played the good alien Martin in the first series, was scheduled to be written out in the conclusion until the script was rewritten — but who won't be in the weekly series — ironically told *Starlog* magazine "I felt trepidation about it becoming a series. I knew enough about the dollars and cents of film-making to realise that we couldn't have continued to do the kind of work that we did in those (first) four hours." Said Jane Badler, "Coming from (daytime) soaps, most of which aren't made with much money or time, *V* was the first thing I'd done that I was really proud of and which I felt was really good quality".

Whatever the eventual quality of the weekly series though — it should be on the air by the time you read this — *V* should not be underrated. It remains a magnificent and worthy achievement in filmed SF and was still streets ahead of the likes of *Automan*, *Manimal*, *Galactica*, *Buck Rogers* and other recent attempts. *V* was exactly what SF should be about — rockets and ray-guns, yes, but also speculation, prophecy, message and warnings. Like the very best SF — and like the very best TV — it entertains while it makes the audience think. In this age of special effects dominated dullness and little cutie-pies from the stars, it's an encouraging move forward for filmed SF after the naivete of *ET* and *Star Wars*.

One of the mother ships over LA



MARCH New Releases

Elliot Gould, Michael Caine, Robert Urich, Mary Crosby, Kim Novak, Margaux Hemingway and Cybill Shepherd — just a few of the big names coming your way

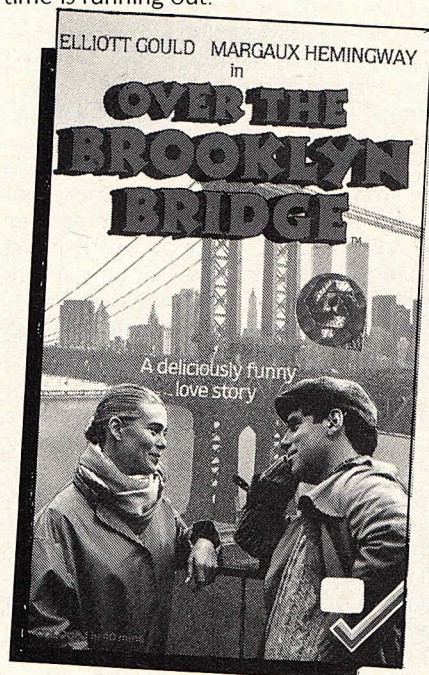
OVER THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE

Elliott Gould Margaux Hemingway
Guild Home Video
100 minutes

For years, Alby Sherman (Elliott Gould), has run a greasy spoon cafe in Brooklyn with his mother (Shelley Winters). He longs to sell up and buy a smart Manhattan restaurant, and he is close to realising his dream when he finds the perfect place on First Avenue.

He turns to his Uncle Benjamin (Sid Caesar) for help, and surprisingly, he agrees to give him the money. However there is one condition — he must leave his beautiful non-Jewish girlfriend Elizabeth (Margaux Hemingway), and marry his decidedly kinky cousin, Cheryl (Carol Kane).

Alby refuses Benjamin's terms, but time is running out.



THE NAKED FACE

Roger Moore
Guild Home Video
103 minutes

A speeding car leaps onto the sidewalk, and narrowly misses killing Dr Judd



Not so Bondage Roger Moore under the gun of Elliot Gould

Stevens (Roger Moore), a successful and renowned psychoanalyst. Recovering from the ordeal, he begins to piece together the tragic incidents that have led to this deliberate attempt on his life.

At first the slaying of his patient, Bruce Boyd, and his receptionist Carol, seemed like two unrelated incidents. But after this recent attack, Stevens concludes that they were unfortunate victims of a killer's vengeance.

In a frantic race against time, he searches his patient files as well as his mind to come up with some clues as to who could be perpetrating these crimes.

Guild are also releasing four new children's tapes. *The All New Incredible Hulk* contains three more thrilling episodes — 'Tomb Of The Unknown Hulk', 'Prisoner Of The Monster' and 'Origin Of The Hulk'; in *Return Of The Spider Queen*, our leggy heroine spins her web to fight off evil in three great new stories: 'The Great Magini', 'Invasion From The Black Hole' and 'Return Of The Spider-Queen'; *The Invincible Iron Man — Cliffs Of Doom* — *Cassette 4* contains three 16-minute episodes featuring Tony Stark, the

world's greatest genius — his secret invention is a suit of armour equipped with fantastic jet power. Whenever he puts this on, he is transformed into an armour-clad hero of the free world. Finally in *Spider Man Battles The Moleman* — *Cassette 6*, Peter Parker (Spider-Man), the famous Marvel character stars in a further eight action-packed, fun-filled stories.

For more adult tastes, Guild are also releasing the original *A Streetcar Named Desire*, which starred Marlon Brando and Vivien Leigh and won 5 Academy Awards.

ACT OF PASSION

Kris Kristofferson Marlo Thomas
CBS/Fox Video
95 minutes

One night of passion has terrifying repercussions for Kathryn Beck (Marlo Thomas). Lured out of her self-imposed solitude by the kind and gentle Ben (Kris Kristofferson), she spends the night with him, only to have her happiness shattered the next morning by a dozen policemen breaking into her apartment.

Handcuffed and arrested, she is brutally interrogated. Suddenly she finds herself a primary accomplice to an act she knows nothing about — Ben is a suspected terrorist, and the Police think she's a member of the gang. Persecuted by sensation-seeking reporters, Kathryn is threatened and followed wherever she goes — until she snaps with horrifying results.

SEDUCED

Cybill Shepherd José Ferrer
CBS/Fox Video

Michael Riordan is a high flying executive who heads a giant organisation. But his big business dealings start to make the sweet taste of success turn sour when he discovers his former lover is now married to his main rival who is blocking a lucrative merger deal. This leads to a thrilling sensual plot of power and love with a classic twist.

To coincide with the 100th